

Message

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Subject: USS Lead - Press

East Chicago press clips**US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs****June 29, 2017****Northwest Indiana Times – Four East Chicago schools have PCB levels****Iowa Public Radio – UI Study Finds Cancer-Causing PCBs in Some Schools****Post Tribune – Study: Replace aging building materials in schools****Liberation News – Poisoned and discarded by HUD, EPA environmental racism in East Chicago, IN****Construction & Demolition Recycling – East Chicago residents wary of housing demolition**

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/education/four-east-chicago-schools-have-pcb-levels/article_19fa411c-a58a-5a78-84a7-95aa8430fbb2.html

Four East Chicago schools have PCB levels

- [Carmen McCollum](#) Northwest Indiana Times

A study released Wednesday by the University of Iowa shows that four schools in the School City of East Chicago contain polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, chemicals known to cause cancer in humans, and that the source of the PCBs is most likely outdated building materials such as window caulking and light ballasts.

However, none of the schools had PCB levels high enough to meet federal standards for immediate remediation, though researchers said the study is important because it shows that reducing airborne PCBs in schools could be accomplished by removing old caulk around windows and modernizing light fixtures.

The study was published Wednesday in Environmental Science & Technology.

East Chicago schools Superintendent Paige McNulty said Wednesday the school system, along with other school districts, voluntarily agreed to be a part of the study.

"Although we are glad that the results did not exceed the EPA guidelines for immediate remediation, our district will be analyzing the results carefully and taking steps to update window caulking and light ballasts as needed," she said.

PCBs are man-made chemical compounds that were used in industrial and commercial applications from 1929 to 1979, when they were banned.

Researchers collected indoor and outdoor air samples at six schools in Iowa and Indiana from 2012 to 2015. The study shows that children's exposure rates are roughly the same in rural and urban areas.

Schools are not required to measure PCBs, but the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provides guidelines for acceptable PCB levels.

The four schools in East Chicago are not far from the Indiana Harbor and Ship Canal, an industrial waterway that is a known source of airborne PCBs. Researchers would not identify the schools by name but said the four schools were built in 1931, 1968, 1986 and 1972.

The study showed that indoor air samples from two of the schools resembled air samples collected near the canal, while indoor air samples from the other two schools presented different results, which researchers concluded were caused by the presence of PCBs typically linked to window caulking and light ballasts.

Rachel Marek, of the UI College of Engineering and the study's lead author, said exposure of school-aged children to PCBs is of particular concern because the compounds impair memory and learning.

Marek said field staff placed collectors on book shelves, trophy cases and other school locations where they sat for three years. She said researchers began analyzing the material last year.

The study's release follows a hectic year for East Chicago schools. Lead contamination was discovered in the West Calumet area, causing the district to close the former Carrie Gosch Elementary School at 455 E. 148th St. last August. During the school year, the district lost more than 400 students when families had to move out of the West Calumet complex.

<http://iowapublicradio.org/post/ui-study-finds-cancer-causing-pcbs-some-schools#stream/0>

UI Study Finds Cancer-Causing PCBs in Some Schools

By KATARINA SOSTARIC *Iowa Public Radio*

University of Iowa researchers have found cancer-causing chemicals in some older Iowa schools.

Children may be exposed to airborne polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in schools built between 1950 and the mid-1970s. PCBs were banned in 1979.

Keri Hornbuckle, professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of Iowa, says the researchers expected to find higher levels of airborne PCBs outside of schools.

"We were surprised to find that many schools have indoor concentrations of PCBs that are much higher than outside, suggesting that there are direct sources of these chemicals inside of schools," Hornbuckle says.

She says likely sources include old caulking around windows and fluorescent light fixtures. Replacing those materials can reduce the concentration of PCBs in a school.

Hornbuckle says it's long been known that PCBs are present in some foods, and that's how scientists expect children take in most of those chemicals.

"Our study showed that inhalation of PCBs in their schoolrooms could also be another large source of PCBs," Hornbuckle says. "And our estimation is that it could be similar to that that they get from their food."

PCB levels found so far in Iowa schools are below what's considered dangerous by the Environmental Protection Agency, but Hornbuckle says levels are high enough to be concerning.

The study included schools in Iowa and Indiana.

Hornbuckle says her team will try to learn more about the different sources of PCBs in schools and how they can be safely removed.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/post-tribune/news/ct-ptb-east-chicago-iowa-st-0629-20170628-story.html>

Study: Replace aging building materials in schools

Meredith Colias Post-Tribune

A study released Friday by the University of Iowa that included four East Chicago schools concluded the presence of aging caulking and light fixtures may lead to diminished air quality inside the buildings.

Between 2012 and 2015, researchers from the Iowa Superfund Research Program collected air samples from four schools in East Chicago near the Indiana Harbor and Shipping Canal and two rural schools in southeastern Iowa.

The levels inside the Iowa schools registered about the same as aerial polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) found in tested East Chicago schools, leading researchers to test and confirm that aging materials were to blame, the study said. Their results also varied from room to room, said UI College of Engineering researcher Keri Hornbuckle.

"This is not a finding we expected when we started this study," she said.

All results fell below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's actionable threshold.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, higher exposure to PCBs can lead to cancer and respiratory problems.

But, lower-level exposure risks — as was the case in the six schools tested — are not as clear.

PCBs were typically used in building materials until they were banned in 1979.

"We, along with other school districts, voluntarily agreed to be a part of the University of Iowa Research Study to have them test some of our schools for PCBs," East Chicago Superintendent Paige McNulty said via email.

"Due to the lead crisis in the community earlier this year, we wanted to be diligent with checking all we could for the health and safety of our students and staff," she wrote. "Although we are glad that the results did not exceed the EPA guidelines for immediate remediation, our district will be analyzing the results carefully and taking steps to update window caulking and light ballasts as needed."

Typical materials that should be targeted for removal are caulking, adhesives and light fixtures from older fluorescent lights, Hornbuckle said.

Researchers declined to identify which schools were specifically tested, or if they were public or private schools.

According to the report, they tested four schools within a 1.5-mile radius of the Indiana Harbor and Shipping Canal. Schools were built in 1931, 1968, 1986 and 1972, the study said.

<https://www.liberationnews.org/poisoned-discarded-hud-epa-environmental-racism-east-chicago/>

Poisoned and discarded by HUD, EPA environmental racism in East Chicago, IN

By Don Gross, Liberation Jun 29, 2017

On July 26 over 50 residents of East Chicago gathered at a meeting hosted by the Department of Housing and Urban Development the Environmental Protection Agency to have their voice heard about the proposed demolition of the local West Calumet Housing Complex in East Chicago due to its contamination with lead and other toxic chemicals.

The meeting took place next to the housing complex at the old Carrie Gosch Elementary School, which was also evacuated last year due to contamination. While residents delivered well-prepared questions and critiques, officials were silent and disinterested. They delivered no answers at this sham of a meeting.

The West Calumet Housing Complex was a public housing complex built in the early 1970s. In 2016, residents were told they needed to leave because of high levels of lead and other toxic substances in the building and its surrounding soil. East Chicago is a primarily black and Latino community, with most residents at the meeting being black. Meanwhile, the officials speaking at the meeting were all white.

The meeting was supposedly meant to elicit public comments on a recent report by HUD that demolition of the West Calumet Housing Complex would “have no significant impact on the human environment.” Comments were limited to three minutes, and officials were well prepared to cut off speakers if they exceeded that limit. All comments were supposed to be limited solely to the report, excluding the many issues intertwined with any demolition. Residents who were unsatisfied with the report’s findings quickly realized they would receive no answers from the officials at the meeting, and were only promised to have their questions answered later.

Over twenty residents asked questions at the meeting, all of which were critical of the process. Many comments were focused on the specifics of the demolition and its safety, while others placed the demolition into a wider context of neglect and exploitation of the community. Multiple lifelong residents spoke of how lead and other toxins had contributed to health problems.

In addition to the demolition, many comments directed to HUD expressed concern that residents were forced out of the West Calumet Housing Complex only to move to other houses in the area with high levels of lead. Others were concerned that former residents had been relocated to neighborhoods in Chicago that could be dangerous for young men.

In general, the community felt excluded and alienated from the planning process. Even during the meeting, officials were called out for eye-rolling when residents were talking. One woman said the entire meeting was another example of the environmental racism that residents have faced. After over an hour of comments, Jim Cunningham, the Deputy Regional Administrator for HUD, was forced to promise that he’d respond to demands for another meeting before the comment period ended on July 6th.

Tara Adams, a former resident of the West Calumet Housing Complex, was forced to move out due to lead and described the moving process as horrible. She had lived in the complex for 10 years and is concerned how exposure to lead will affect her children. Alyssa, her youngest daughter, is going to be starting at a new school this fall and she is uncomfortable having to start all over in a new place. Adams believes all this could have been avoided if officials looked out more for her community. Despite her new residence, Adams still makes it to as many community meetings in East Chicago as she can.

Northwest Indiana has a long history of heavy industry, being a major center for the US steel industry and other manufacturing firms. While the profits from these industries were immense, those left the area and today residents are instead left with its toxic byproducts.

Toxic pollution in East Chicago isn’t a new discovery. EPA documents dating back the 1980s show the soil around the West Calumet Housing Complex had dangerously high levels of lead. Residents and activists say that officials ignored these warnings for years, leaving the working-class people of color in the area to live and work in dangerously toxic environments.

Larry Davis, who has been involved in activism against toxic waste dumping since the 1980s, commented during the meeting that HUD and the EPA did not do their due diligence with regards to the planned demolition West Calumet Housing Complex. He described the three-mile radius around the neighborhood as having at least a dozen sites that are or should be superfund sites.

East Chicago residents and their allies are organizing for their community. Groups such as the East Chicago/Calumet Community Advisory Group, Calumet Lives Matter, and the Community Strategy Group – East Chicago had a presence at the meeting and expressed their concerns. HUD and the EPA may have meant for the meeting to just be a formality before the demolition, but residents made it into a venue to attack continued mistreatment of their community. While governments and corporations try to ignore the crisis in East Chicago, the community continues the fight.

<http://www.cdrecycler.com/article/east-chicago-residents-wary-of-housing-demolition/>

East Chicago residents wary of housing demolition

Construction & Demolition Recycling

Residents are questioning the environmental impacts of the demolition located on a Superfund site.

Residents are questioning the environmental impacts of a demolition project in East Chicago, [a report by the Northwest Indiana Times says](#). Around 70 residents attended the meeting June 26 for the demolition of the West Calumet Housing Complex.

Despite the complex being in zone 1 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) USS Lead Superfund site, preliminary findings from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) said demolition of the site would have no impact on the environment.

According to the report, a HUD handout from the meeting said there are currently no plans for the site after the complex's demolition but the EPA says it plans to clean the property to residential standards. A letter from Mayor Anthony Copeland was given to the EPA and requested the EPA to support efforts to return the site to residential use.

A remediation plan was prepared by the East Chicago Housing Authority by Amereco Engineering Inc., Valparasio, Indiana, that stated demolition of the complex was necessary to protect human health. John Blosky, Amereco environmental engineer, says water will be sprayed continuously on building materials during the demolition and loaded onto trucks to be taken to landfill.

Blosky also says that rain water will be collected and filtered before being put into the city sewer system and that air samples will be collected at the site and its perimeter for airborne asbestos fibers, dust, arsenic and lead.

Wind screens will also be present at the site, placed on security fencing to slow the wind that may contain dust.

According to the report, demolition will stop completely if the wind gets too high.

EPA will monitor Amereco's work and is considering posting air monitoring data online during the process if available.

Since HUD made preliminary determinations of the site's environmental impacts, an environmental impact is not required, the report says, but residents are requesting one.

Sincerely,

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